



Montgomery County Council

From the Office of Councilmember Valerie Ervin

December 17, 2012

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Coalition of Elected Officials Support Expansion of Maryland Meals For Achievement

*On Wednesday, Dec. 19, at Roscoe Nix Elementary in
Silver Spring, Event Will Explain Need to Increase
Universal Breakfast Program in Maryland*

ROCKVILLE, Md., December 17, 2012—Montgomery County Councilmember Valerie Ervin, who chairs the Council's Education Committee, at 10:15 a.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 19, will join with a coalition of elected officials, leaders of youth organizations and residents at Roscoe Nix Elementary School in Silver Spring to highlight the importance of universal breakfast. The event will recognize the leadership of Governor Martin O'Malley and Share Our Strength for their partnership leading to an additional 33,000 kids starting their day with breakfast.

The event will highlight the Maryland Meals for Achievement (MMFA) program, and emphasize the need for its expansion. Among those joining Councilmember Ervin will be Anne Sheridan, Maryland Director of the "No Kid Hungry Campaign" at Share Our Strength; members of the Montgomery delegation to the Maryland General Assembly including Senator Jamie Raskin and Delegates Tom Hucker and Susan Lee; State Delegate Aisha Braveboy of Prince George's County; Montgomery County Board of Education President Christopher Barclay; and Annette M. Ffolkes, principal of Roscoe Nix Elementary.

Maryland Meals for Achievement is a national model for increasing access to the National School Breakfast Program, with proven links to improved educational performance, health and behavior. It allows schools that have at least 40 percent of

students eligible for free or reduced-price meals (FARMS) to provide universal, in-classroom breakfast.

In MMFA schools, such as Roscoe Nix Elementary, the average participation in school breakfast is close to 70 percent. That is significantly higher than school breakfast participation in non-MMFA schools. Low-income children are at the greatest risk of food insecurity, and often, the meals that they do receive outside of a structured program lack the vitamins and nutrients essential for their development. The lack of good nutrition can have a dramatic impact on student achievement.

Councilmember Ervin, with the support of the entire Montgomery County Delegation to the General Assembly and most of the Prince George's County Delegation, will be requesting an additional \$1.8 for the Fiscal Year 2014 Maryland State Department of Education budget to fund an estimated 130 additional MMFA eligible schools.

"Providing nutritious meals is one of the most immediate and cost effective ways to improve a child's health and performance in the classroom," said Councilmember Ervin. "The groundswell of support I have received from the Montgomery and Prince George's County delegations illustrates how much of an impact this program has on the lives of children. As the chair of the Council's Education Committee, I am thankful for the many partners we have at the federal and state levels to support summer food and universal breakfast in Montgomery County."

In Montgomery County, more than one out of every seven children is at risk of hunger. Over the last three academic years, the number of children qualifying for free or reduced-price meals in the county has increased more than 25 percent with more than 47,000 children now falling below 185 percent of the federal poverty level. Currently, Montgomery County has more than 80 schools that meet the criteria to participate in MMFA, but because of funding levels, only 40 schools are benefiting from the program this school year.

In Prince George's County, over the last three academic years, the number of children qualifying for free or reduced-price meals has increased by nearly 20 percent with more than 70,000 children now falling below 185 percent of the federal poverty level. Prince George's County now has more than 150 schools that meet the criteria to participate in MMFA, but at the current funding level, only 27 schools are benefiting from the program this school year.

"As a mom I know how miserable my boys get when a meal is late. How can we expect any child to be able to focus and learn without regular, healthy meals," said Delegate Jolene Ivey, who chairs the Prince George's Delegation. "Maryland Meals for Achievement fills students' stomachs so they can concentrate on filling their brains."

Governor O'Malley also is known for his commitment to ending childhood hunger in Maryland. Through the Partnership to End Childhood Hunger in Maryland and the dedicated support of Share Our Strength's national No Kid Hungry Campaign, Gov. O'Malley has proven to be a staunch champion for kids struggling with hunger over the course of his administration. His commitment is vital in the fight to ensure that all of the nearly 237,000 Maryland children at risk of hunger have the foundation for a bright and healthy future.

"Under the Governor's leadership and through his political courage, 33,000 additional low-income children are eating breakfast now around the state," said Ms. Sheridan. "We are proving that where there is political will, we can solve real problems. Today, we are saluting the Governor's leadership and reaffirming our commitment to ending childhood hunger, specifically through expanding Maryland Meals for Achievement."

The success of the MMFA Program is also a result of the commitment of Montgomery County Public Schools.

"It is the administrators, principals, teachers, cafeteria workers and support staff in our schools who make it possible for our children to receive a healthy breakfast in classrooms throughout the County," said Councilmember Ervin. "Working together, we have moved this issue forward as a priority for our children, and while we have been successful, there is still more work to do to ensure that none of our children start the day hungry."

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